BATMAN
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DEC 90
US $1.00
CAN $1.25
UK 50P
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GRANT • BREYFOGLE • MITCHELL

MASTER of FEAR
HOAR
HA HA HA ARRRRRR
"The wearer of the mask partakes of the power of the divinity or spirit which the mask symbolizes..."
—ENCYCLOPEDIA OF MAGIC AND SUPERSTITION

ALAN GRANT WRITER | NORM BREYFOGLE PENCILLER | STEVE MITCHELL INKER | ADRIENNE ROY COLORIST | TODD KLEIN LETTERER | KELLEY PUCKETT ASST. ED. | DENNIS O'NEIL EDITOR | BOB KANE CREATOR | SPECIAL THANKS TO KEVIN BREYFOGLE

BATMAN 000 Published monthly by DC Comics Inc., 666 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10103. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to BATMAN, DC Comics Subscriptions, P.O. Box 0528, Baldwin, NY 11510. Annual subscription rate $12.00, Canada $17.00, all other foreign $24.00. U.S. funds only. Copyright © 1990 DC Comics Inc. All Rights Reserved. The stories, characters and incidents mentioned in this magazine are entirely fictional. All characters featured in this issue and distinctive likenesses thereof are trademarks of DC Comics Inc. Advertising Representative: Print Advertising Representatives, 355 Lexington Avenue, New York, NY 10017 (212) 949-6850.
Printed in U.S.A.
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...A CITY IN TERROR IS A GREAT THING -- BUT IT WAS ONLY A MEANS TO AN END.
CHEST'S ON FIRE. HURTS TO BREATHE. AT LEAST ONE RIB CRACKED FOR SURE.
DEEP CUT, LEFT ARM. SHOULDER WAS WRENCHED IN THE FALL. I'LL BE A MASS OF BRUISES TOMORROW...
A TRAP FOR YOU, BATMAN! THE ULTIMATE CHRISTMAS PRESENT TO MYSELF!
IF THERE IS A TOMORROW!
THIS IS INSANE, SCARECROW! WHAT DO YOU HOPE TO GAIN..?
A WARM GLOW. THE PLEASURE OF SLOWLY...
...UNWRAPPING YOU!
SO--YOU WANT ME, YOU'VE GOT ME! WHY NOT LET THE GIRL GO?
NEVER CHANGE, DO YOU? SAME TIRED OLD CONCERN FOR THE WEAK AND INNOCENT.
BUT MISS VICKI VALE ISN'T QUITE THE INNOCENT. SHE'S A JOURNALIST.
SHE WAS INVESTIGATING MY HIRELINGS. RATHER STUPIDLY, THEY BROUGHT HER HERE!
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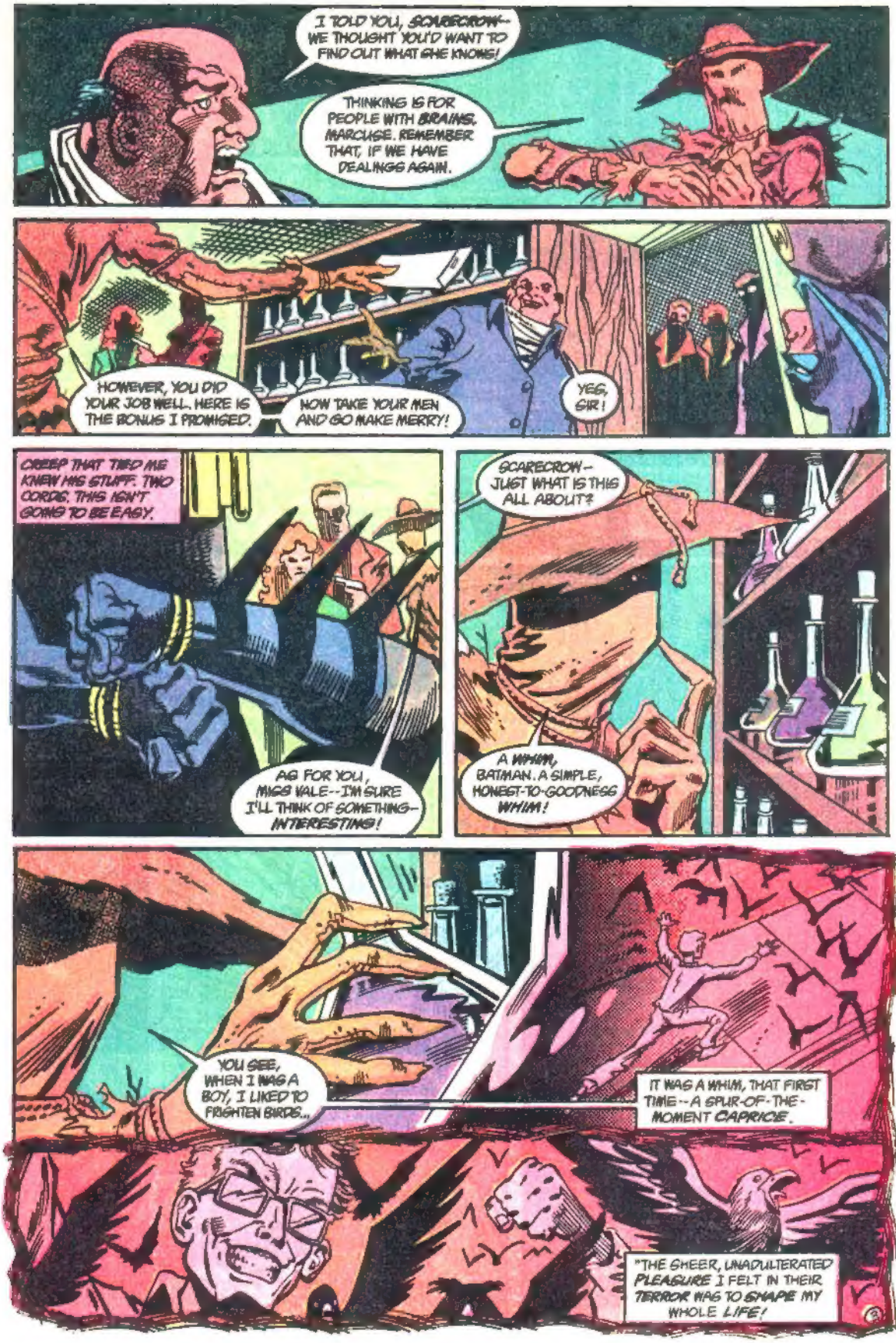
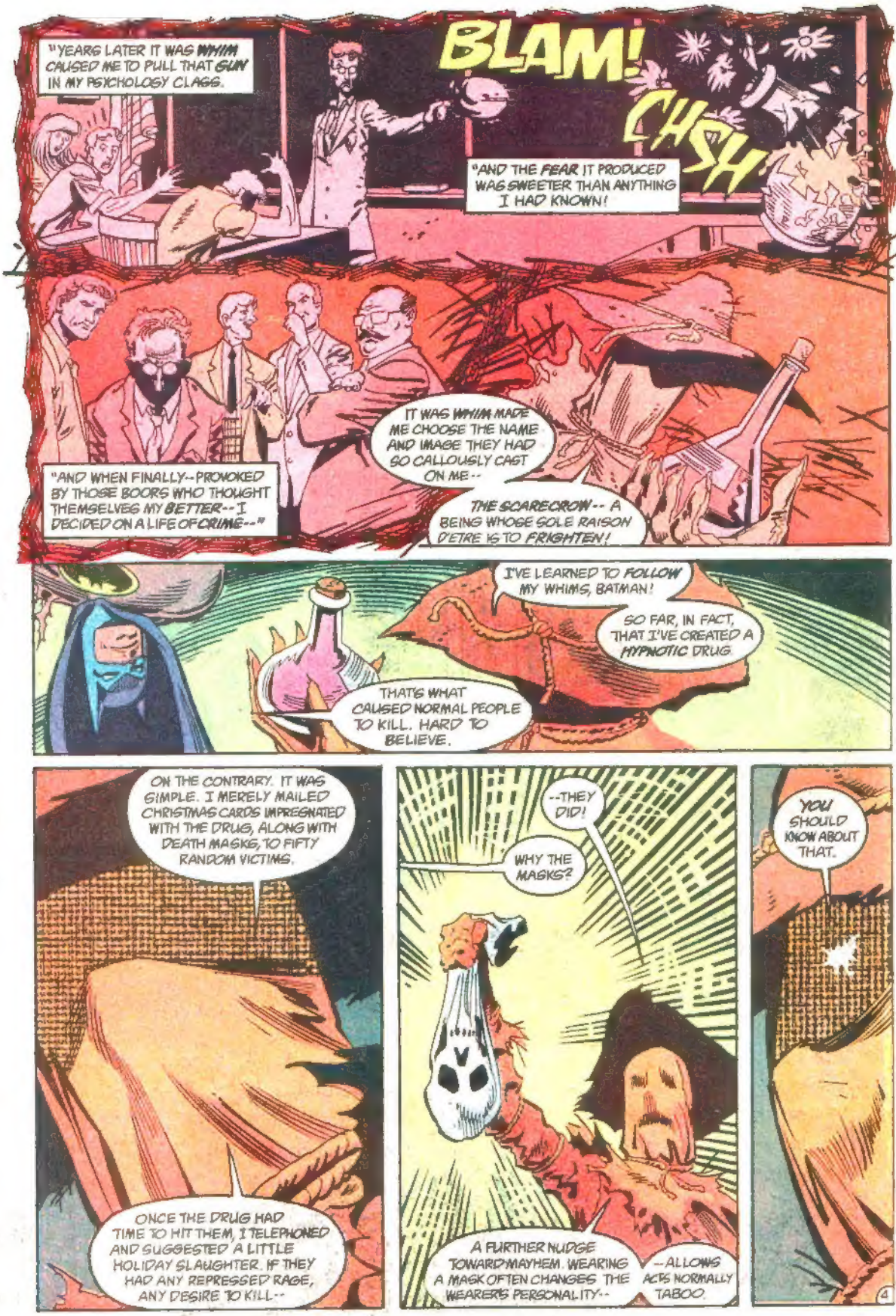
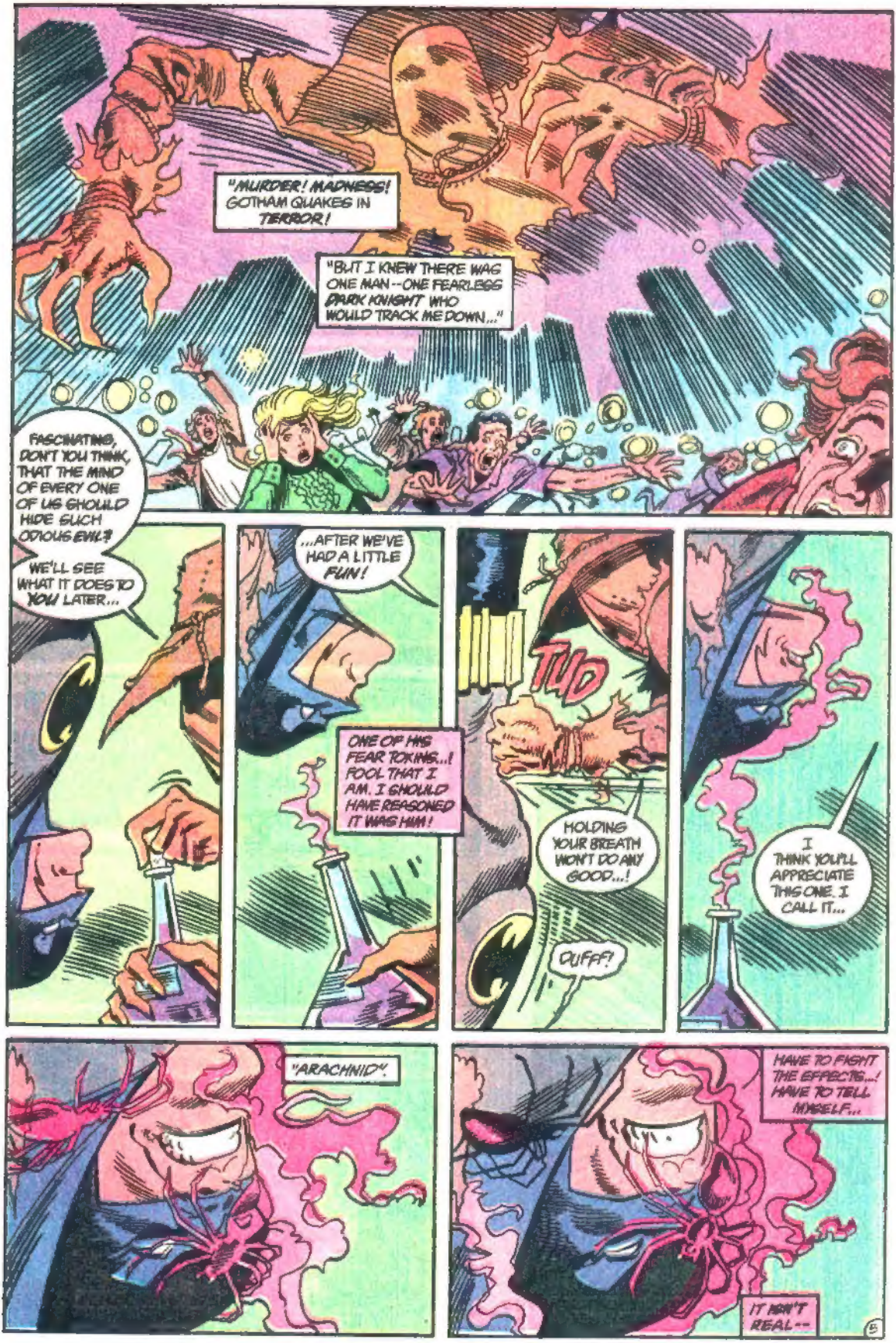
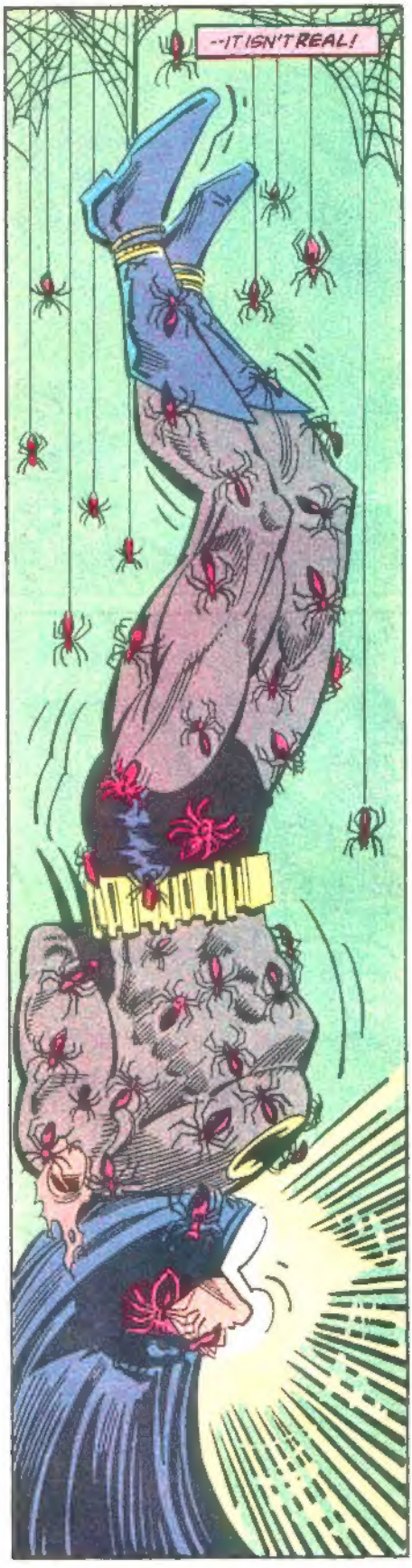
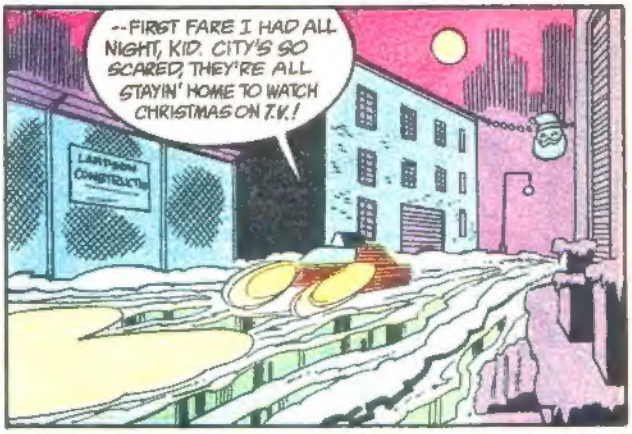
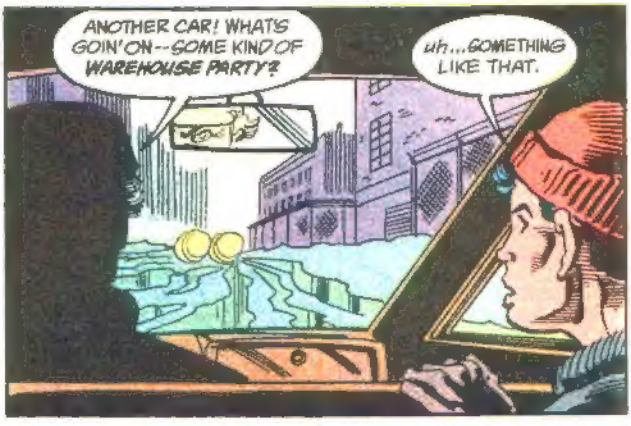

I TOLD YOU, SCARECROW--WE THOUGHT YOU'D WANT TO FIND OUT WHAT SHE KNOWS!
THINKING IS FOR PEOPLE WITH BRAINS, MARCUSE. REMEMBER THAT, IF WE HAVE DEALINGS AGAIN.
HOWEVER, YOU DID YOUR JOB WELL. HERE IS THE BONUS I PROMISED.
NOW TAKE YOUR MEN AND GO MAKE MERRY!
YES, SIR!
CREEP THAT TIED ME KNEW HIS STUFF. TWO CORDS. THIS ISN'T GOING TO BE EASY.
AS FOR YOU, MISS VALE--I'M SURE I'LL THINK OF SOMETHING--INTERESTING!
SCARECROW--JUST WHAT IS THIS ALL ABOUT?
A WHIM, BATMAN. A SIMPLE, HONEST-TO-GOODNESS WHIM!
YOU SEE, WHEN I WAS A BOY, I LIKED TO FRIGHTEN BIRDS...
IT WAS A WHIM, THAT FIRST TIME--A SPUR-OF-THE-MOMENT CAPRICE.
"THE SHEER, UNADULTERATED PLEASURE I FELT IN THEIR TERROR WAS TO SHAPE MY WHOLE LIFE!

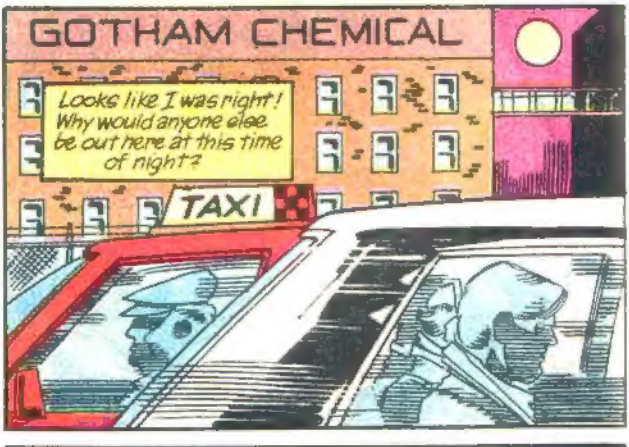

"YEARS LATER IT WAS WHIM CAUSED ME TO PULL THAT GUN IN MY PSYCHOLOGY CLASS.
BLAM!
CHSH
"AND THE FEAR IT PRODUCED WAS SWEETER THAN ANYTHING I HAD KNOWN!
IT WAS WHIM MADE ME CHOOSE THE NAME AND IMAGE THEY HAD SO CALLOUSLY CAST ON ME--
THE SCARECROW-- A BEING WHOSE SOLE RAISON D'ETRE IS TO FRIGHTEN!
"AND WHEN FINALLY--PROVOKED BY THOSE BOORS WHO THOUGHT THEMSELVES MY BETTER--I DECIDED ON A LIFE OF CRIME--"
I'VE LEARNED TO FOLLOW MY WHIMS, BATMAN!
SO FAR, IN FACT, THAT I'VE CREATED A HYPNOTIC DRUG
THAT'S WHAT CAUSED NORMAL PEOPLE TO KILL. HARD TO BELIEVE.
ON THE CONTRARY. IT WAS SIMPLE. I MERELY MAILED CHRISTMAS CARDS IMPREGNATED WITH THE DRUG, ALONG WITH DEATH MASKS, TO FIFTY RANDOM VICTIMS.
ONCE THE DRUG HAD TIME TO HIT THEM, I TELEPHONED AND SUGGESTED A LITTLE HOLIDAY SLAUGHTER. IF THEY HAD ANY REPRESSED RAGE, ANY DESIRE TO KILL--
--THEY DID!
WHY THE MASKS?
A FURTHER NUDGE TOWARD MAYHEM. WEARING A MASK OFTEN CHANGES THE WEARER'S PERSONALITY--
--ALLOWS ACTS NORMALLY TABOO.
YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT THAT.
4

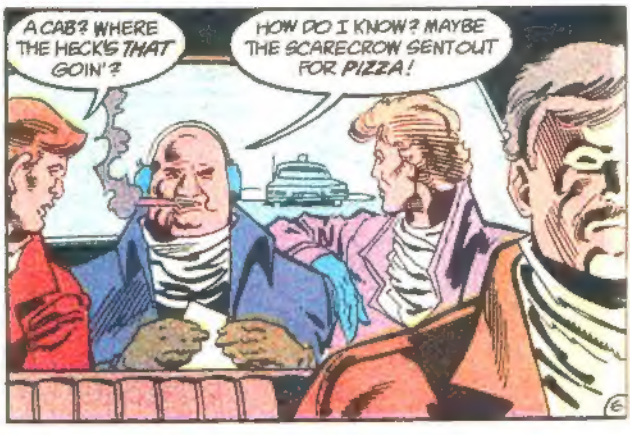

"MURDER! MADNESS! GOTHAM QUAKES IN TERROR!
"BUT I KNEW THERE WAS ONE MAN--ONE FEARLESS DARK KNIGHT WHO WOULD TRACK ME DOWN..."
FASCINATING, DON'T YOU THINK, THAT THE MIND OF EVERY ONE OF US SHOULD HIDE SUCH ODIOUS EVIL?
WE'LL SEE WHAT IT DOES TO YOU LATER...
...AFTER WE'VE HAD A LITTLE FUN!
ONE OF HIS FEAR TOXINS...! FOOL THAT I AM. I SHOULD HAVE REASONED IT WAS HIM!
TUD
HOLDING YOUR BREATH WON'T DO ANY GOOD...!
OUFF!
I THINK YOU'LL APPRECIATE THIS ONE. I CALL IT...
"ARACHNID".
HAVE TO FIGHT THE EFFECTS...! HAVE TO TELL MYSELF...
IT ISN'T REAL--
15

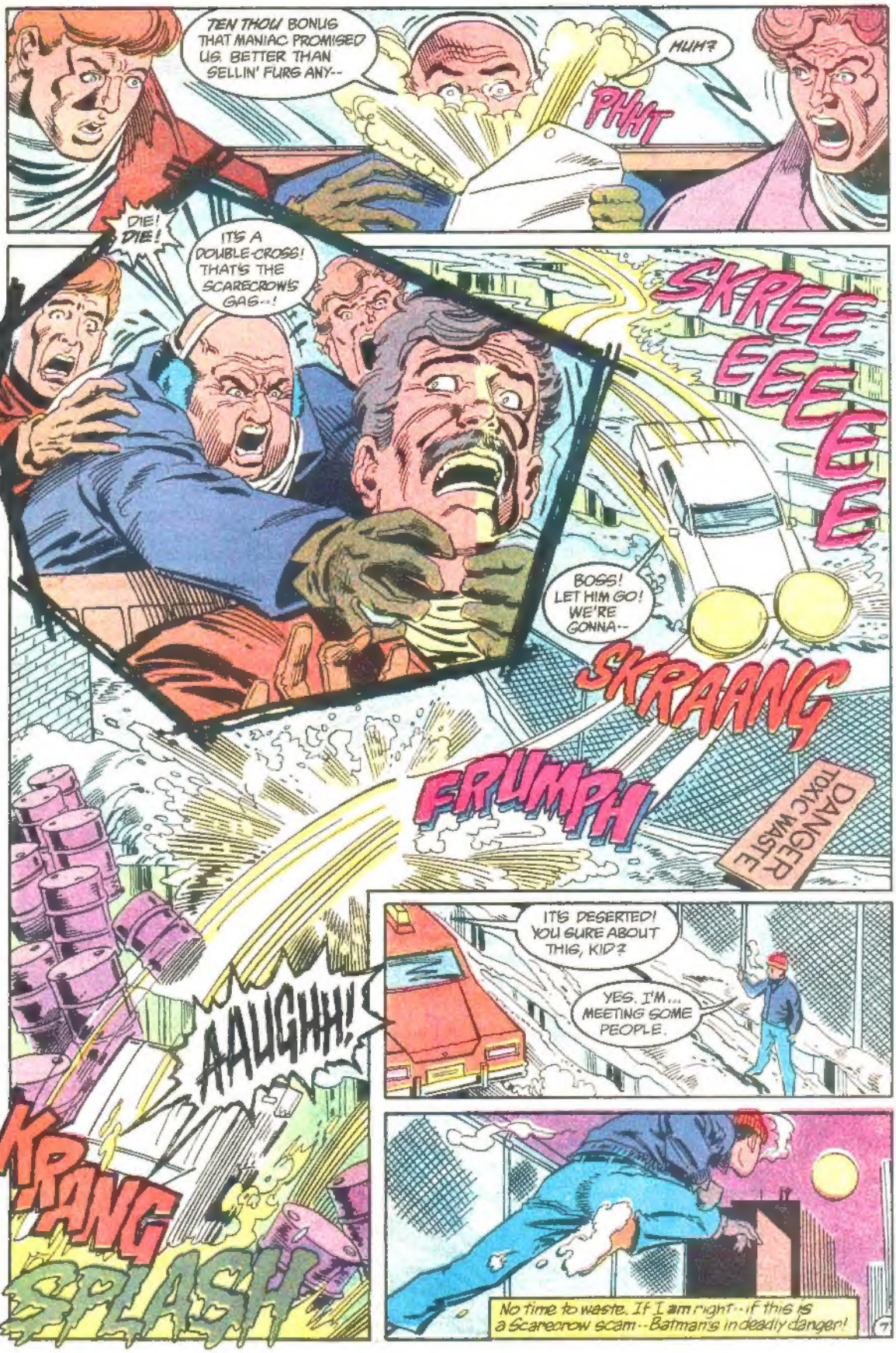

--IT ISN'T REAL!

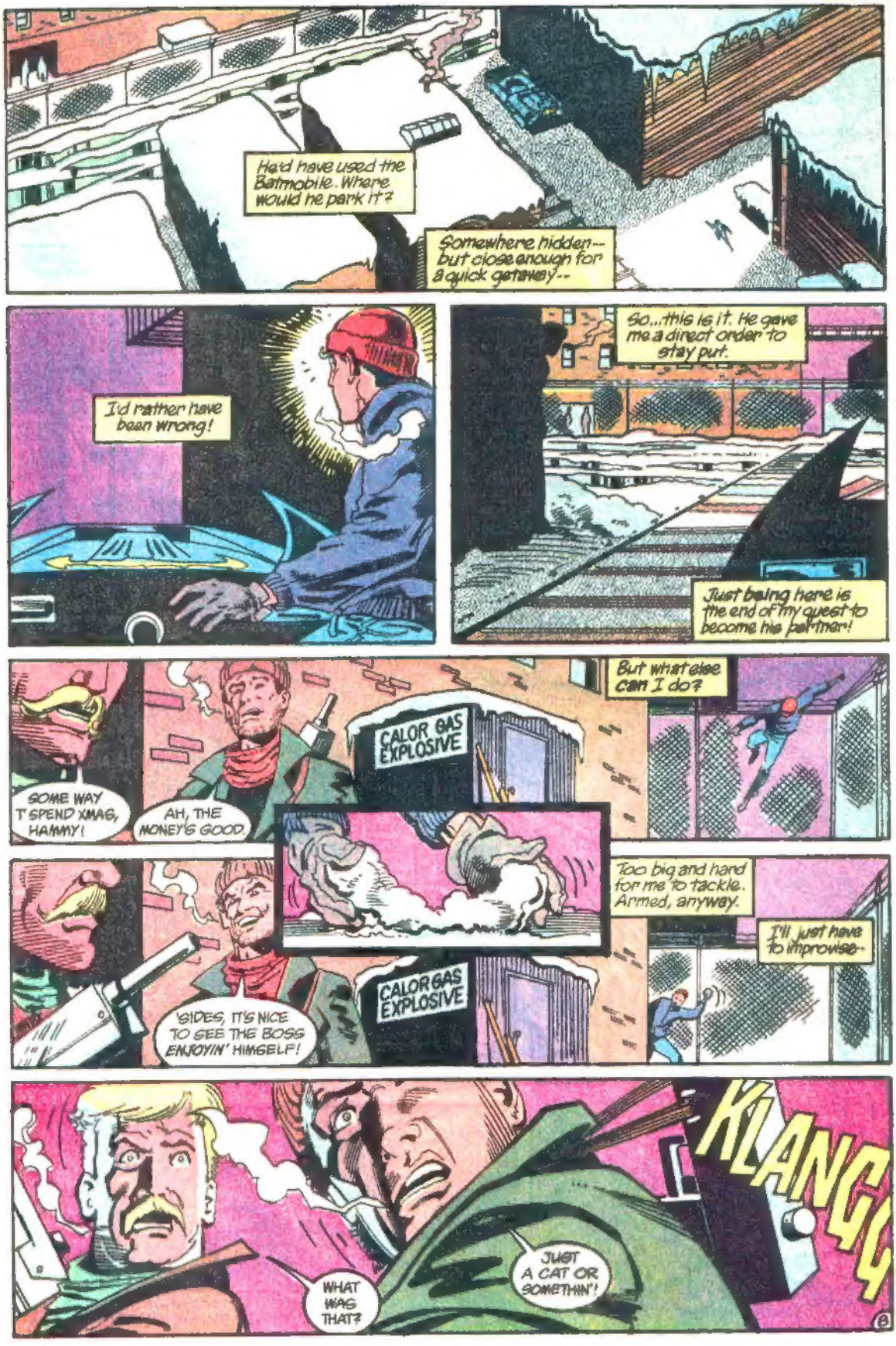

--FIRST FARE I HAD ALL NIGHT, KID. CITY'S SO SCARED, THEY'RE ALL STAYIN' HOME TO WATCH CHRISTMAS ON T.V.!


ANOTHER CAR! WHAT'S GOIN' ON--SOME KIND OF WAREHOUSE PARTY?
uh...SOMETHING LIKE THAT.


GOTHAM CHEMICAL
Looks like I was right! Why would anyone else be out here at this time of night?
TAXI


A CAB? WHERE THE HECK'S THAT GOIN'?
HOW DO I KNOW? MAYBE THE SCARECROW SENT OUT FOR PIZZA!


TEN THOU BONUS THAT MANIAC PROMISED US. BETTER THAN SELLIN' FURS ANY--
PHHT
HUH?
DIE! DIE!
IT'S A DOUBLE-CROSS! THAT'S THE SCARECROW'S GAS--!
SKREEEEEEE
BOSS! LET HIM GO! WE'RE GONNA--
SKRAANG
FRUMPH
DANGER TOXIC WASTE
IT'S DESERTED! YOU SURE ABOUT THIS, KID?
YES. I'M... MEETING SOME PEOPLE.
AAUGHH!
KRANG
SPLASH
No time to waste. If I am right--if this is a Scarecrow scam--Batman's in deadly danger!
7


He'd have used the Batmobile. Where would he park it?
Somewhere hidden--but close enough for a quick getaway--
I'd rather have been wrong!
So...this is it. He gave me a direct order to stay put.
Just being here is the end of my quest to become his partner!
But what else can I do?
CALOR GAS EXPLOSIVE
SOME WAY T' SPEND XMAS, HAMMY!
AH, THE MONEY'S GOOD
Too big and hard for me to tackle. Armed, anyway.
I'll just have to improvise.
CALOR GAS EXPLOSIVE
'SIDES, IT'S NICE TO SEE THE BOSS ENJOYIN' HIMSELF!
KLANG
WHAT WAS THAT?
JUST A CAT OR SOMETHIN'!
8

OH YEAH? WEARIN' BOOTS, MAYBE?
C'MON!
KLANG
AWRIGHT! WHOEVER'S IN THERE, I'M GONNA COUNT T' THREE...
ONE!
TWO!
SLAM!
HEY--!
'S WEDGED! I CAN'T BUDGE IT!
THEN WE'LL SHOOT IT OPEN!
NO NAKED FLAME
LIQUID GAS NO NAKED FLAME
LIQUID GAS NO NAKED FLAME
UH, I DON'T THINK SO, HAMMY...!
COMING OUT OF IT? FINE. LET'S JUST SEE WHAT ELSE...
YOU MONSTER!

YOU'RE CRAZY! WHY DON'T YOU LEAVE HIM ALONE?!
CRAZY? ME?
YOU SAY THAT IN DEFENSE OF A MAN WHO DRESSES LIKE A BAT?
I'M NOT MAD. I JUST LIKE FEAR!
THIS IS "ESSENCE DE TRAUMA," BY THE WAY
PSSSST!
HAMMY? LEON..?
YOU THERE, GU--
-UUHH!
...but he's only dazed!
KLUNK!
I hoped I wouldn't have to do this--!

ANYTHING IN YOUR CHILDHOOD YOU'D RATHER NOT REMEMBER...?
BLOOD'S POUNDING IN MY HEAD CAN'T THINK STRAIGHT. DON'T SEE ANY WAY...
At least he's still alive!
Only one way in...
But not like this. If I'm recognized, it could lead straight back to Bruce Wayne!
FIGHT IT ALL YOU LIKE, BATMAN--IT WON'T MATTER IN THE END!
BY MORNING, I'LL HAVE PEELED AWAY EVERYTHING YOU ARE...
AND THEN I'LL FIND OUT WHAT DEMONIC THOUGHTS YOU'VE SPENT YOUR MISERABLE LIFE REPRESSING!
NOT THIS!
CRIME ALLEY
DEAR LORD, NOT THIS!

JONATHAN CRANE--SCARECROW!
STEP AWAY FROM HIM--NOW!
AND WHO ARE YOU, MY DWARFISH FRIEND?
NONE OF YOUR CONCERN! CUT HIM DOWN!
AAAH!
WHAT -?
Careless I should have made sure? -
SLAM!
IMPRESSIVE WORK HERE- HAVE YOUR REWARD!
AND YOU, MISS VALE--!
SPSH
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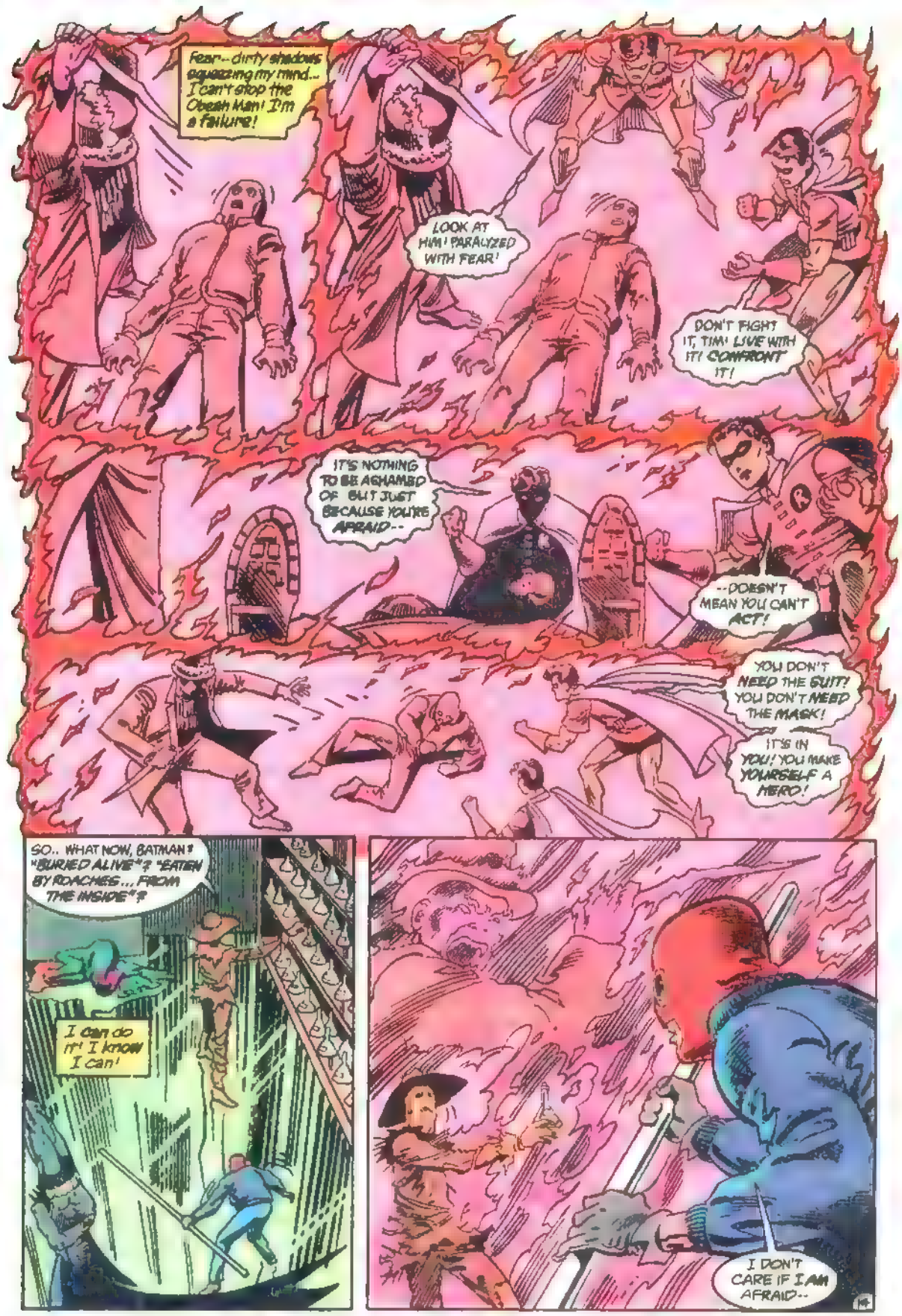
It's some sort of fear gas! Trauma! He called it! Can't see... I already...
The Obeah Man! Mom—Dad... he's killing them!
Rejection... failure... fear... like weights in my mind, dragging me down...
I have to fight...!
I have to...
NO! NO!
MY PUPPY! YOU RAN OVER MY PUPPY!
AHH... FEAR! ITS ESSENCE IS ALMOST PALPABLE...!
MERRY CHRISTMAS, JONATHAN.
HOHAHRRRRRRR
I'M NOT AFRAID. I'M NOT! I'M NOT! I'M NOT!
13


Fear--dirty shadows squeezing my mind... I can't stop the Ubeam Man! I'm a failure!
LOOK AT HIM! PARALYZED WITH FEAR!
DON'T FIGHT IT, TIM! LIVE WITH IT! CONFRONT IT!
IT'S NOTHING TO BE ASHAMED OF BUT JUST BECAUSE YOU'RE AFRAID--
--DOESN'T MEAN YOU CAN'T ACT!
YOU DON'T NEED THE SUIT! YOU DON'T NEED THE MASK!
IT'S IN YOU! YOU MAKE YOURSELF A HERO!
SO.. WHAT NOW, BATMAN? "BURIED ALIVE"? "EATEN BY ROACHES... FROM THE INSIDE"?
I can do it! I know I can!
I DON'T CARE IF I AM AFRAID--

WUMP!
I CAN STILL ACT!
SMASHH!
CRASH!
MY TOXINS--!
AAAH!
Got to get clear--
CRASHHH!
N-NO--KEEP AWAY!!

KEEP AWAY! LEAVE ME ALONE!
AIEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE
BATMAN ..?
BATMAN ..!
ROBIN ?

GOTHAM CHEMICAL
--MAYBE THE CABBY WAS DRUNK!
I MEAN, WHAT WOULD A KID BE DOIN' OUT HERE AT MIDNIGHT ON CHRISTMAS..?!
THAT'S WHAT WE'RE GONNA FIND OUT!
SHOOT! SOMETHIN'S GOIN' ON!
MORE LIKE A WAR THAN A WAREHOUSE PARTY, THOUGH!
WELL, I'LL BE--!

DON'T HURT ME! PLEASE--!
--ALL THE BLOOD EVERYWHERE--
IT'S OKAY, VICKI. YOU'LL BE ALL RIGHT.
No, not Robin. Not now. Not ever!
But at least he's alive!
GET MISS VALE TO THE HOSPITAL. LOCK HIM UP.
STAIRS
THEY'LL BOTH COME BACK TO NORMAL AS SOON AS THE DRUG WEARS OFF.
YOU DON'T LOOK IN GREAT SHAPE YOURSELF, BATMAN! YOU WANT TO COME--?
POLICE
I'VE OTHER BUSINESS.
THEY'VE GONE.
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ARE YOU OKAY?
STILL A BIT... WOOZY. BUT-- IT'S WEARING OFF.

WHAT DID I TELL YOU?
TO STAY HOME.
BUT--I FIGURED IT WAS THE SCARECROW. I KNEW YOU WERE WALKING INTO A TRAP!

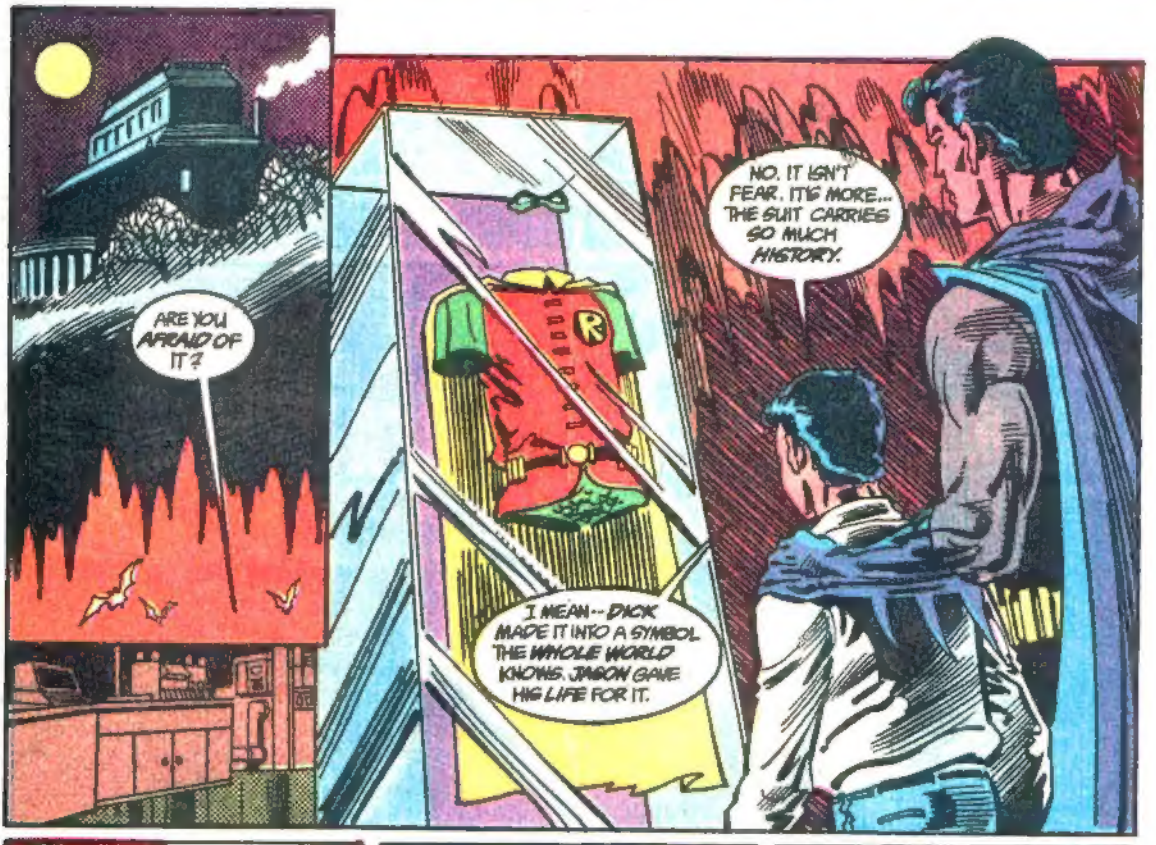
I'M SORRY. I KNOW IT MEANS I'LL NEVER BE YOUR PARTNER. I'LL NEVER WEAR THE SUIT.
WHY DIDN'T YOU WEAR IT TONIGHT?
I THOUGHT-- IF I FAILED, I'D DISGRACE IT.

I COULDN'T LIVE WITH THAT.

YOU'VE LEARNED SOMETHING VALUABLE, SON.
SURE, WE MAKE UP THE RULES, AND THEN WE HAVE TO STICK TO THEM. BUT SOMETIMES A HUNCH-- A FEELING IN YOUR GUT-- MAKES YOU THINK AGAIN.

SOMETIMES--NOT VERY OFTEN, AND ONLY WHEN IT'S JUSTIFIED-- A HERO GETS TO BREAK THE RULES.
IF YOU HADN'T, VICKI VALE AND I WOULD BOTH BE DEAD.

THANKS...
...ROBIN.


ARE YOU AFRAID OF IT?
I MEAN--DICK MADE IT INTO A SYMBOL THE WHOLE WORLD KNOWS. JASON GAVE HIS LIFE FOR IT.
NO. IT ISN'T FEAR. IT'S MORE... THE SUIT CARRIES SO MUCH HISTORY.

FAILING THEM--WHAT THEY FOUGHT SO HARD TO BUILD--THAT'S WHAT WORRIES ME!
I APPRECIATE THAT, TIM. THAT COSTUME WEIGHS A WHOLE LOT MORE THAN ANY SYMBOL SHOULD...

AND I'D BE FAILING YOU IF I EXPECTED YOU TO BEAR THAT WEIGHT.
SO...LET ME KNOW WHAT YOU THINK.

A mask has a double edge, he said. It hides your own anxiety as it strikes fear into your enemy.
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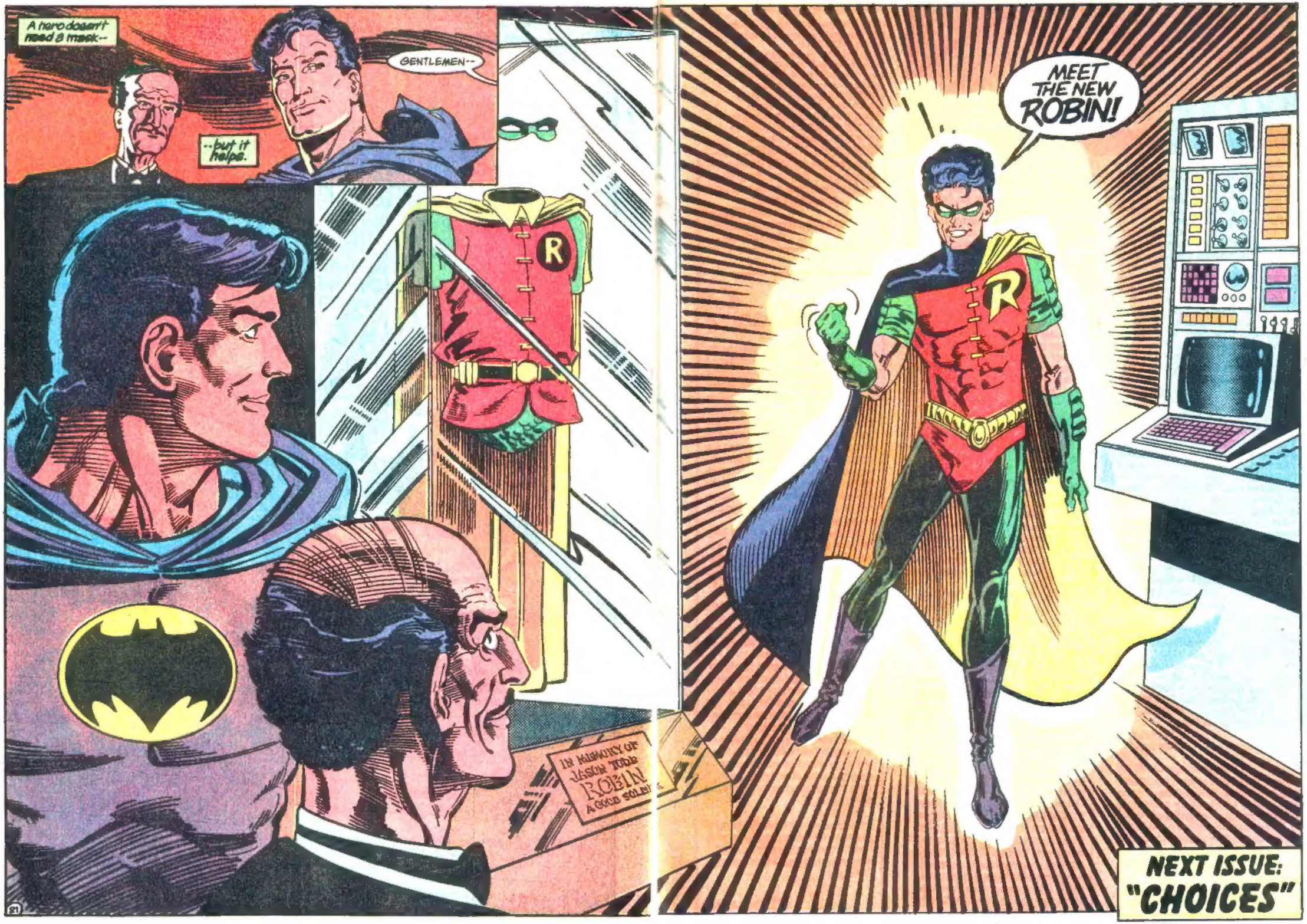
A hero doesn't need a mask--
..but it helps.
GENTLEMEN--
R
IN MEMORY OF
JASON TODD
ROBIN
A GOOD SOLDI
MEET THE NEW ROBIN!
R
NEXT ISSUE:
"CHOICES"